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## A RECONSIDERATION OF THE *KITĀB AL-MAĠDAL*

BY  
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For scholars devoting themselves to the field of Christian Arabic studies Georg GRAF's *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* is truly indispensable. On almost every point of issue this enormous work may be consulted<sup>1</sup>. When scholars today add new material to GRAF's *Geschichte*, or correct mistakes found in it, this does not in any way diminish the fundamental merit of the work. Having said this, I now feel free to add a few question-marks to the margins of those pages on which GRAF deals with the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*<sup>2</sup>.

## A. STATUS QUAESTIONIS

### 1. THE POSITION OF GRAF

According to GRAF, a certain MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN composed, in the middle of the twelfth century, a work in seven chapters called *Kitāb al-Mağdal li-l-istibṣār wa-l-ğadal*. Two hundred years later (i.e. about 1350) ʿAMR IBN MATTAʿ, from ṬIRHĀN is supposed to have written a book on the pattern of MĀRI's work, with the same title but divided into five chapters instead of seven.

GRAF regrets the poor status of Ms **Vat. ar. 110**, which he considers to be the autograph of ʿAMR IBN MATTAʿ. Nevertheless, the whole work has been saved, according to GRAF, through a plagiarism by a contemporary of the author, the priest ṢALĪBA IBN YUḤANNAʿ, from MOSUL.

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1) List of abbreviations:

GISMONDI (ed.) = Henricus GISMONDI, *Maris Amri et Slibae De patriarchis Nestorianorum Commentaria*. Pars prior. *Maris Textus arabicus*. Romae, 1899. *Maris versio latina*. Romae, 1899. Pars altera. *Amri et Slibae textus*. Romae, 1896. *Versio latina*. Romae, 1897.

LANDRON, *Apologétique* = Bénédicte LANDRON, *Apologétique, polémique et attitudes nestoriennes vis-à-vis de l'islam entre le 8<sup>e</sup> et le début du 14<sup>e</sup> siècle*. (Thèse pour le doctorat d'état sous la direction de M. Roger ARNALDEZ, Université de Paris IV). Paris, 1978 (unpublished).

SAMIR, MZ = Šams al-Riyāṣah ABŪ L-BARAKĀT IBN KABAR, *Miṣbāḥ al-ḡulma fī idāḥ al-ḥidma*, Ed. SAMIR Khalil (Cairo, Maktabat al-Kārūz, 1970). [First part only, i.e. ch. 1-12].

WESTPHAL = Gustav WESTPHAL, *Untersuchungen über die Quellen und die Glaubwürdigkeit der Patriarchenchroniken des MĀRI IBN SULAIMĀN, ʿAMR IBN MATTAʿ und ṢALĪBA IBN YUḤANNAʿ* (Kirchhain, N.-L., 1901).

2) See GCAL II 202 and 216-218.

ŞALIBĀ is supposed to have committed literary larceny by producing, in his own name, a new edition of ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ's *Kitāb al-Maġdal* with minor changes and certain additions, giving the book the new title *Asfār al-asrār*. To strengthen his claims to authorship ŞALIBĀ is supposed to have antedated the work to the year 1332.

## 2. THE PROBLEM: THE TESTIMONY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

In order to prepare an edition of MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN's *Kitāb al-Maġdal*, in collaboration with Joseph HABBĪ and Samir Khalil SAMIR, I have tried to collect systematically microfilms of all manuscripts known to contain not only MĀRI's book but also the works associated with ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ, and ŞALIBĀ IBN YUḤANNĀ. During the spring of 1991 I also had the opportunity to consult the relevant manuscripts in the Vatican Library *in situ*.

As my acquaintance with these manuscripts grew I became more and more inclined to doubt GRAF's picture of the state of things. The immediate reason for my scepticism is the lack of harmony between the attributions of the texts to MĀRI, ʿAMR and ŞALIBĀ made by GRAF and the attributions found in the manuscripts themselves. [See Tables 2 and 3]. All the manuscripts now to be found in Europe which GRAF attributes to MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN are in fact either anonymous or attributed to ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ!<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, all the manuscripts which GRAF attributes to ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ, are in fact either anonymous or attributed to MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN! Only in the case of ŞALIBĀ IBN YUḤANNĀ, whom GRAF considers a plagiarist, do we find an agreement between GRAF and the manuscripts. To say the least, then, the issue of authorship is somewhat confusing.

In addition to this, the five-chapter *Kitāb al-Maġdal* which GRAF attributes to ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ and the likewise five-chapter *Asfār al-asrār* which he attributes to ŞALIBĀ IBN YUḤANNĀ, are evidently one and the same book. GRAF himself in fact admits as much when he characterizes ŞALIBĀ's work as a plagiarism differing from its model only in insignificant variants and some additions<sup>4</sup>.

3) Cf. GCAL II 201-202 where GRAF admits this.

4) See GCAL II 217.

Because of the confusion attached to the issue of authorship and the probable identity between what GRAF designates as 'AMR's book and ŠALIBĀ's plagiarism, I prefer to speak of «The **Seven-Chapter Work**» (i.e. the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*) and «The **Five-Chapter Work**» (i.e. the *Asfār al-asrār*).

### 3. ORIGIN OF GRAF'S VIEW

Before presenting further arguments against GRAF's exposition, and before proposing another picture, an attempt to trace the origin of GRAF's view is appropriate. In order to do this we have to turn back to ASSEMANI, GISMONDI and WESTPHAL, the scholars GRAF obviously depends on.

#### *a) Assemani's position*

When dealing with this issue in the eighteenth century ASSEMANI had only three manuscripts at his disposal. The first and second parts of the **Seven-Chapter Work** are contained in Mss **Vat. ar. 108** and **109**, respectively, and Ms **Vat. ar. 110** contains the **Five-Chapter Work** without the beginning and the end.

The **Seven-Chapter Work** (i.e. the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*) was attributed to MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN by ASSEMANI on the basis of two instances at the end of the historical part on the Nestorian patriarchs, where the otherwise unknown MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN expresses himself in the first person, mentioning his own name<sup>5</sup>. ASSEMANI attributed the work to MĀRI in spite of the fact that Ms **Vat. ar. 108**<sup>6</sup> clearly attributes the text to 'AMR IBN MATTĀ, whom also ABŪ L-BARAKĀT<sup>7</sup> mentions as the author of the **Seven-Chapter Work**.

As for Ms **Vat. ar. 110**, ASSEMANI considered it as the author's autograph, presumably because of the numerous corrections written in the same hand as the text itself. This **Five-Chapter Work** ASSEMANI<sup>8</sup> attributed to 'AMR IBN MATTĀ. The exact reason why he did so, against the attribution in the manuscript, is not quite clear. Perhaps he recognized in Ms **Vat. ar. 110**

5) See ASSEMANI, *BO* III,1, 554-555. Cf. GISMONDI (ed.) I 146/13.

6) Ms **Vat. ar. 110**, fol. 1<sup>a</sup>/3.

7) See SAMIR, *MZ* 298-300. Cf. ASSEMANI, *BO* III,1, 580-581.

8) See ASSEMANI, *BO* III,1, 586-589.

a theological and historical encyclopaedic work similar to the seven-chapter *Kitāb al-Maġdal*. Since the **Seven-Chapter Work** had been attributed to MĀRĪ, the name ʿAMR IBN MATTA mentioned by ABŪ L-BARAKĀT and in Ms **Vat. ar. 108** was, so to speak, lacking a work.

ASSEMANI<sup>9</sup> dated the otherwise unknown ʿAMR IBN MATTA to the fourteenth century. He did so on the basis of a passage at the end of the historical section on the Nestorian patriarchs, in which the author of that passage is shown still to be alive 650 years after the death of the patriarch ḤNĀNĪŠŌ<sup>c</sup> (who died in 699)<sup>10</sup>. ASSEMANI's implication is that the text must have been written after 1349.

#### b) Gismondi's contribution

At the end of the last century Enrico GISMONDI edited the historical part on the Nestorian patriarchs from the **Seven-Chapter Work**, which under the influence of ASSEMANI he attributed to MĀRĪ IBN SULAYMĀN. He also edited the corresponding section in the **Five-Chapter Work**.

As his basic manuscript for the **Seven-Chapter Work** GISMONDI used Ms **Vat. ar. 109**. In addition to this manuscript GISMONDI also consulted Ms **Paris ar. 109** (presumably a copy of Ms **Vat. ar. 109**)<sup>11</sup> and a manuscript from MOSUL<sup>12</sup>. Both these manuscripts were unknown to ASSEMANI.

Also for the **Five-Chapter Work** GISMONDI had access to two additional manuscripts besides Ms **Vat. ar. 110**<sup>13</sup>. While, like Ms **Vat. ar. 110**, Ms **Vat. Borg. 198** lacks the beginning and end, Ms **Vat. Neof. 54** is complete. At the beginning of this manuscript we also find the name of the author and the date of its composition<sup>14</sup>. Here we learn that the priest ŠALĪBĀ IBN YŪḤĀNNĀ started writing the work in the year 1332. In his edition GISMONDI copies the text in Ms **Vat. Neof. 54**, and puts in brackets those words and passages which do not occur in Ms **Vat. ar. 110**<sup>15</sup>. How-

9) See ASSEMANI, *BO* III, 1, 580.

10) See GISMONDI (ed.) II 60/1-6.

11) Cf. WESTPHAL 1.

12) See GISMONDI (ed.) I v-vii.

13) See GISMONDI (ed.) II v-vii.

14) See **Vat. neof. 54**, fol. 1<sup>b</sup>/8-11 and GISMONDI (ed.) II vi.

15) For a critical opinion of GISMONDI's editorial technique, see DAUVILLIER, xx.

ever, on the relation between the two manuscripts GISMONDI does not say very much.

*c) Westphal's position*

A few years later, in 1901, Gustav WESTPHAL published his study on the texts edited by GISMONDI<sup>16</sup>. He follows the tradition from ASSEMANI and GISMONDI attributes the **Seven-Chapter Work** to MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN and the **Five-Chapter Work** in Ms **Vat. ar. 110** to ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ.

What is new in Westphal's study is that he regards the text in **Vat. Neof. 54** as a plagiarism executed by ṢALIBĀ, on the model of the text he attributes to ʿAMR<sup>17</sup>. According to WESTPHAL it is clear that ṢALIBĀ's text (in Ms **Vat. Neof. 54**) represents a subsequent revision in relation to ʿAMR's text (in Ms **Vat. ar. 110**)<sup>18</sup>. Since, according to the argument presented by ASSEMANI, ʿAMR's text was written after the year 1349, ṢALIBĀ's own dating of his text to the year 1332 must represent a deliberate antedating<sup>19</sup>.

From ASSEMANI through GISMONDI and WESTPHAL we can observe how a certain picture of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* and of MĀRI, ʿAMR and ṢALIBĀ is taking form. GRAF represents only the final stage in this process, by giving a condensed synopsis of the theories of ASSEMANI, GISMONDI and WESTPHAL.

## B. CRITIQUE OF GRAF'S SYNTHESIS

As already mentioned my scepticism towards these now traditional and generally accepted theories grew out of my acquaintance with the manuscripts and the lack of harmony between the attributions by GRAF of the texts to MĀRI, ʿAMR and ṢALIBĀ and the attributions found in the manuscripts themselves. I was excited when I found the same sceptical attitude expressed in Bénédicte Landron's unpublished thesis defended in Paris in

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16) See especially WESTPHAL 1-21.

17) See WESTPHAL 5 and 16-17.

18) See WESTPHAL 9ff.

19) See WESTPHAL 7 and 17.

1978<sup>20</sup>. In the following I will summarize the main arguments against the traditional view epitomized by GRAF.

# 1. ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ'S LITERARY ACTIVITY WAS NOT «SHORTLY AFTER 1349»<sup>21</sup>

At least three writers who died before that date mention ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ as the author of the *Kitāb al-Maġdal*. As already mentioned ABŪ L-BARAKĀT<sup>22</sup>, who died in 1324, gives ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ as the author of the *Kitāb al-Maġdal*. The same is true of ʿABDIŠŪ<sup>23</sup>, who died in 1318, as well as of al-Mu'taman IBN AL-ʿASSĀL<sup>24</sup>, who wrote his *Maġmūʿ uṣūl ad-dīn* shortly after 1260<sup>25</sup>.

# 2. ṢALIBĀ'S WORK IS NOT A PLAGIARISM

In MS Vat. Neof. 54 we find both the statement that ṢALIBĀ started writing the work in the year 1332 and the statement that 650 years have elapsed since the death of ḤNĀN İSHŪʿ, which seems to point to the year 1349. As WESTPHAL<sup>26</sup> observed, it is strange that ṢALIBĀ should have left these two incompatible dates side by side (unless ṢALIBĀ actually spent eighteen years writing the book - which is extremely unlikely). If ṢALIBĀ had deliberately antedated his work to 1332 he would of course have been able to alter the statement about the 650 years in order to eliminate the disharmony. Obviously ṢALIBĀ did not regard the two statements as incompatible. Consequently he must have used the 650 years as a round number not intended for arithmetical calculations. The statement about the work being written in 1332 is very likely valid.

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20) See LANDRON, *Apologétique*, 166-184. The first scholar to point out the inconsistency of Graf's position was probably SAMIR in *Islamochristiana* 2 (1976) 222-223 (N° 22.13) and (1977) 274 (N° 13).

21) See GCAL II 217.

22) See SAMIR, *MZ*, 298-300. Cf. ASSEMANI, *BO* III,1, 580-581.

23) According to ASSEMANI, *BO* III,1, 580.

24) According to GCAL II 201-202.

25) See Khalil SAMIR, «Date de composition de la Somme Théologique d'al-Mu'taman Ibn al-ʿAssāl», in OCP 50 (1984) 94-106+3 pl. SAMIR corrects here the opinion of GRAF expressed in GCAL II 409.

26) See WESTPHAL 17.



In addition to this it is possible that Ms **Vat. ar. 110** also should be attributed to ṢALIBĀ. According to LANDRON<sup>27</sup>, who has compared the handwriting of this manuscript with that of Ms **Paris ar. 204**, which is an autograph by ṢALIBĀ written in 1335, Ms **Vat. ar. 110**, too, is most likely an autograph of ṢALIBĀ.

There is a crux here, though, in the fact the title *Kitāb al-Mağdal* and the name MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN as being its author occur in Ms **Vat. ar. 110**<sup>28</sup> as well as in Ms **Vat. ar. 687**<sup>29</sup> - which perhaps is a copy made from Ms **Vat. ar. 110**. No one seems to have bothered to explain this attribution<sup>30</sup>.

### 3. MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN (12<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY) IS NOT THE AUTHOR OF THE SEVEN-CHAPTER WORK *KITĀB AL-MAGDAL*

#### a) *The Evidence of the Manuscripts*

First, not a single one of the manuscripts containing the **Seven-Chapter Work** which I have consulted attributes the work to MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN. The only two occurrences of an attribution to MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN are the ones just mentioned in Mss **Vat. ar. 110** and **687**. But here, the name is clearly connected with the **Five-Chapter Work**.

Secondly, in all the manuscripts containing the **Seven-Chapter Work** the work is either anonymous or attributed to ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ. The attribution to ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ is also corroborated by ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, al-Mu'taman IBN AL-ʿASSĀL, and ʿABDĪŠŪʿ, as we already have observed.

#### b) *Quotations from 10<sup>th</sup> Century Authors as Being Contemporary*

Thirdly, there are indications that the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* was written at a date earlier than the middle of the twelfth century when MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN flourished.

27) See LANDRON, *Apologétique*, 170.

28) See Ms **Vat. ar. 110**, fol. 216<sup>a</sup>/1-2.

29) See Ms **Vat. ar. 687**, fol. 1<sup>a</sup>.

30) GRAF, though, mentions that Ms **Vat. ar. 687** is attributed to MĀRI. See GCAL II 218.

In his work the author of the *Kitāb al-Maġdal* often paraphrases or quotes passages from theologians. Unfortunately he rarely mentions the names of these theologians, but refers to them by means of vague expressions such as *wa-qāla baʿḍ al-mu'minīn*<sup>31</sup> or *wa-li-l-falāsifa kalām kaṭīr fī*<sup>32</sup> or *wa-qāla baʿḍ ahl zamāninā*<sup>33</sup>. Such vague expressions of course make it difficult to identify the sources of these passages. Sometimes, though, the sources admit of identification. I will now give three examples where the author refers to contemporary writers with the expression *wa-qāla baʿḍ ahl zamāninā*, and then quotes or paraphrases passages from writers who lived much earlier than the middle of the twelfth century, i.e. the time when MĀRĪ IBN SULAYMĀN flourished.

In *bāb* 2, *faṣl* 3 (*al-Taṣyīd*) the author refers to a contemporary<sup>34</sup>, and then partly quotes, partly paraphrases a passage found in ʿĪSĀ, IBN ZURʿĀ's letter to the Jew BIṢR IBN FĪNḤĀS IBN ŠUʿAYB AL-ḤĀSIB<sup>35</sup> which was written in the year 997<sup>36</sup>. It seems strange that someone writing in the middle of the twelfth century should call IBN ZURʿĀ, who died as early as in 1008, his contemporary.

In the same *faṣl*, the author again attributes to a contemporary<sup>37</sup> an obvious paraphrase of a passage composed in the tenth century by no less a writer than YAḤYĀ IBN ʿADĪ (d. 974) in his *Maqāla fī ṣiḥḥat iʿtiqād al-Naṣārā*<sup>38</sup>.

In fact the *Kitāb al-Maġdal* often paraphrases passages from YAḤYĀ IBN ʿADĪ, without mentioning his name but referring to him as a contemporary<sup>39</sup>. In *bāb* 2, *faṣl* 1 (*al-Ḍurwa*)<sup>40</sup> we find *verbatim* quotations from

31) E.G. Ms Paris ar. 190, fol. 79<sup>b</sup>/10.

32) E.G. Ms Paris ar. 190, fol. 72<sup>a</sup>/1.

33) E.G. Ms Paris ar. 190, foll. 36<sup>b</sup>/12-13, 66<sup>a</sup>/14 and 77<sup>a</sup>/8.

34) See Ms Paris ar. 190, fol. 77<sup>a</sup>/8.

35) See Paul SBATH, *Vingt traités philosophiques et théologiques d'auteurs arabes chrétiens du IX<sup>e</sup> au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Cairo, 1929), 42/1ff.

36) See GCAL II 255.

37) See Ms Paris ar. 190, fol. 66<sup>a</sup>/14.

38) See Augustin PÉRIER, *Petits traités apologétiques de Yahyā ben ʿAdī* (Paris, 1920).

39) Cf. LANDRON, *Apologétique*, 170.

40) Compare Ms Paris ar. 190, foll. 36<sup>b</sup>/14-16, 37<sup>a</sup>/3 and 37<sup>a</sup>/12-13ff with YAḤYĀ IBN ʿADĪ, *Maqāla fī l-tawḥīd*, ed. SAMIR Khalil, coll. PAC 2 (1980), §§ 21, 112 and 148ff.

YAḤYĀ IBN ʿADĪ's *Maqāla fī l-tawḥīd*, introduced by the formula *wa-qāla baʿd ahl zamānina*<sup>41</sup>.

### c) Additional Arguments

Additional arguments for an earlier dating of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* than the twelfth century have been suggested by LANDRON. For instance the author of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* talks about the faith having been spread among the nations «since about a thousand years»<sup>42</sup> which would suggest the early eleventh century as the time when the work was composed.

Further, the author of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* still translates the terms πρόσωπον / *parṣōpā* (syr.) for the one and only person of Christ into Arabic *wagh*, not *ṣahṣ*, which with ʿAbd Allāh IBN AL-ṬAYYIB (d. 1043) became the standard translation<sup>43</sup>. This may indicate that the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* was composed before ʿAbd Allāh IBN AL-ṬAYYIB's terminological preferences had become prevalent.

## 4. A HISTORICAL DIFFICULTY

Now, if the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* was composed in the early eleventh century, how do we explain the two instances, at the end of the historical section on the Nestorian patriarchs, where a certain MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN presents himself as having personally met eye witnesses to events that took place under the patriarchs MAKKIḤĀ (1092-1109)<sup>44</sup> and BARṢAWMĀ (1123-1136)<sup>45</sup>, and the fact that the last patriarch described in the work is ʿABDISHŪʿ III<sup>46</sup>, who died in 1147?

In order to answer this question we have to remind ourselves that the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* is a large encyclopaedic work on theology in which the historical part on the Nestorian patriarchs constitutes only a section of one of the seven chapters. This part on ecclesiastic history is no novel creation

41) See Ms Paris ar. 190, fol. 36<sup>b</sup>/12-13.

42) Cf. LANDRON, *Apologétique*, 171.

43) Cf. LANDRON, *Apologétique*, 172.

44) See GISMONDI (ed.) I 146/2ff (= Ms Paris ar. 190, fol. 450<sup>b</sup>/11ff.). Cf. ASSEMANI, *BO III*, 1, 555.

45) See GISMONDI (ed.) I 156/21ff (= Ms Paris ar. 190, fol. 457<sup>b</sup>/11ff.).

46) See GISMONDI (ed.) I 156/21ff (= Ms Paris ar. 190, fol. 457<sup>b</sup>/11ff.).

but depends on earlier sources, of which the Chronicle of SE'ERT, according to GRAF<sup>47</sup>, is the principal one.

It is a typical feature of historical chronicles of this kind that subsequent users-readers and copyists tend to up-date them, and continue the report up to their own time. The History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria is a good example of this<sup>48</sup>. And, as a matter of fact, some of the manuscripts containing the *Kitāb al-Maġdal* do have additional material on the patriarchs after ʿABDIŠŌʿ III. In both Ms **Paris ar. 190**<sup>49</sup> and Ms **Vat. ar. 109**<sup>50</sup> accounts on ʾIŠŌʿYĀB, ELIA III and YAHBALLĀHĀ II have been added. Consequently, it is quite possible that MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN is not the author of the entire *Kitāb al-Maġdal* but only a continuator of the historical account in *bāb 5, faṣl 5*.

#### 5. WHO IS THE AUTHOR OF THE *MAĠDAL* ?

If MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN did not write the *Kitāb al-Maġdal*, because of the indications points at an earlier date for the composition of the work (perhaps the beginning of the eleventh century) and the probability that MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN is no more than a continuator of the history of the patriarchs, who, then, is the author of the *Kitāb al-Maġdal*?

Since several manuscripts, some of them among the earliest extant, do not mention any author, there is always the possibility that the author of the work preferred anonymity and has succeeded in his wish.

But perhaps we should trust the witnesses of the majority of manuscripts, and of ABŪ L-BARAKĀT, ʿABDIŠŌʿ and al-Mu'taman IBN AL-ʿASSĀL, who explicitly attributed the *Kitāb al-Maġdal* to ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ. The traditional dating of ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ's life to the middle of the fourteenth century is quite unfounded, depending as it does on ASSEMANI's gratuitous attribution of the *Five-Chapter Work* to ʿAMR IBN MATTĀ. If ʿAMR IBN

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47) See GCAL II 196.

48) Cf. Johannes Den HEIJER's works on Coptic-Arabic historiography. See Johannes Den HEIJER, *Mawhūb ibn Manṣūr ibn Mufarrig et l'historiographie copto-arabe. Étude sur la composition de l'Histoire des Patriarches d'Alexandrie*, coll. CSCO 513/ Subs. 83 (1989), passim, and the bibliography, xii.

49) See Ms **Paris ar. 190**, foll. 459-464.

50) See Ms **Vat. ar. 109**, foll. 256ff.

MATTA is the author of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*, and if the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* was composed in the early eleventh century, we shall of course have to date ʿAMR IBN MATTA's activity to the beginning of that century. As far as I know there are no historical documents that contradict this assumption.

Before closing my critical analysis of the traditional view of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* as epitomized by GRAF, I should perhaps point out that, although it is almost only the historiographical part of this work which has so far been studied by scholars, my own concern with the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* has been mainly related to the dogmatic sections in *bāb* 2. I have prepared a preliminary edition on the basis of four manuscripts of *bāb* 2, *faṣl* 1 (*al-Durwa*) on divine unity. Since one of my experiences from this work may be interpreted as a support for a dating of the composition of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* earlier than the traditional one, I wish to mention it here.

#### 6. IS THE MS PARIS ARABE 190 A COPY OF THE AUTOGRAPH?

It has been suggested, for instance by KÖRKİS İŞHÂQ BUṬRUS<sup>51</sup>, that Ms Paris ar. 190, written in the thirteenth century and thus the oldest surviving manuscript, is undoubtedly a copy of the autograph by the alleged author, MĀRĪ IBN SULAYMĀN. This manuscript should therefore be the most reliable one, and the obvious basis for an edition of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal*.

The assumption of Ms Paris ar. 190 preserving the most reliable and genuine text of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* does not find any support from my experience in editing *bāb* 2, *faṣl* 1 (*al-Durwa*). There are numerous instances where the other manuscripts have preserved what I regard as a more reliable reading than Ms Paris ar. 190. Two examples may suffice.

A typical feature in the vocabulary of the author of the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* is the almost invariable employment of the word *Fārūq* for «Saviour»<sup>52</sup>. Now there is an instance where Ms Vat. ar. 108<sup>53</sup> has pre-

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51) See KÖRKİS İŞHÂQ BUṬRUS, «Kitāb al-Mağdal li-Mārī ibn Sulaymān», *Bayn an-Nahrayn* 7 (1979) 51-60, 193-208 (p. 57). He has also published the introduction in the *Kitāb al-Mağdal* from Ms Paris ar. 190 in *Bayn an-Nahrayn* 12 (1984) 123-131 and 13 (1985) 220-233.

52) Cf. LANDRON, *Apologétique*, 179.

53) See Ms Vat. ar. 108, fol. 29<sup>b</sup>/14.

served what is, in all probability, an original *Fārūq*, while Ms **Paris ar. 190**<sup>54</sup> has the reading *muḥalliṣ*, which is the more common of these two words for «Saviour».

In another instance, the extremely rare word *rasīl* for «companion», «fellow», etc. occurs in all the three other manuscripts<sup>55</sup>, while Ms **Paris ar. 190** has the reading *wasīl*, by far the more common word of the two. Undoubtedly, the three other manuscripts, have here preserved the original reading against Ms **Paris ar. 190**. I have observed the same substitution of *wasīl* for the more difficult *rasīl* in the manuscript tradition of another text, namely the epistle on divine Unity and Trinity by ISRAEL OF KAŠKAR (d. 872)<sup>56</sup>.

If we accept the traditional (traditional, that is, among scholars from ASSEMANI onwards) view that the *Kitāb al-Maġdal* was composed shortly after the middle of twelfth century, it certainly seems strange that a copy made in the early<sup>57</sup> thirteenth century, soon after the original composition of the work, should be superseded in textual authority by more recent copies. If, on the other hand, we assume, according to the argument of this paper, that the *Kitāb al-Maġdal* was written much earlier, perhaps in the beginning of the eleventh century, there is space for a fairly long manuscript tradition between the autograph and Ms **Paris ar. 190**. Thus, there is no chronological reason to regard this manuscript as a copy of the autograph, or as containing a particularly reliable text.

### C. CONCLUSION

In this paper I have taken into reconsideration the complicated issue of the *Kitāb al-Maġdal* by critically analyzing the conventional picture most conveniently summarized and put forward by GRAF. The starting-point has

54) See Ms **Paris ar. 190**, fol. 32<sup>b</sup>/4.

55) See Ms **Vat. ar. 108**, fol. 28<sup>b</sup>/6; Ms **Paris ar. 191**, fol. 26<sup>a</sup>/10; Ms **London ar. suppl. 25**, fol. 41/xx.

56) See Bo HOLMBERG, *A treatise on the Unity and Trinity of God by Israel of Kashkar* († 872). *Introduction, edition and word index*, coll. «Lund Studies of African and Asian Religions» 3 (Lund, 1989) 89.

57) According to KÖRKİS İŞĦAQ BUṬRUS in *Bayn an-Nahrayn* 7 (1979) 57, GRAF is supposed to have dated Ms **Paris ar. 190** to the beginning of the thirteenth century. But I have not been able to find any such statement made by GRAF.

been the striking lack of agreement between the attributions in the manuscripts themselves. According to my view, only two works exists: a Seven-Chapter Work and a Five-Chapter Work. From internal and external evidence, I have tried to show (1) that the Five-Chapter Work, written in the fourteenth century, should be attributed to ŠALIBĀ and should *not* be considered a plagiarism; (2) that the Seven-Chapter Work was written as early as the the beginning of the eleventh century and should *not* be attributed to MĀRI IBN SULAYMĀN (12<sup>th</sup> century), but rather to ʿAMR IBN MATTA, whose literary activity, consequently, should be dated to that century and no later. Though the positive statements and assumptions I have made may very well prove to be wrong, I think enough light has been thrown on the subject to show that the traditional picture rests on a very weak foundation.

BO HOLMBERG

TABLE N° 1:  
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF MSS

BMg 98	= Birmingham, Mingana Chr. Ar. 98
BS 12	= Berlin Sachau 12 (= syr. 116 = ar. 10183)
C 2889	= Cambridge Add. 2889
C 3163	= Cambridge Add. 3163 [= 3293]
D 135	= Diyarbakr 135
D 136	= Diyarbakr 136
L 4240	= London Or. 4240 (Suppl. Ar. 25)
L 2438	= London Or. 2438 (Suppl. Ar. 33)
P 190	= Paris arabe 190
P 191	= Paris arabe 191
P 192	= Paris arabe 192
P 199	= Paris arabe 199
P 4811	= Paris arabe 4811
V 98	= Vaticano arabo 98
V 99	= Vaticano arabo 99
V 108	= Vaticano arabo 108
V 109	= Vaticano arabo 109
V 110	= Vaticano arabo 110
V 122	= Vaticano arabo 122
V 126	= Vaticano arabo 126
V 636	= Vaticano arabo 636
V 687	= Vaticano arabo 687
V 688	= Vaticano arabo 688
VB 198	= Vaticano Borgia arabo 198
VN 54	= Vaticano Neof. 54



TABLE N° 2:  
ATTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO GRAF

MĀRĪ	°AMR	ŞALĪBĀ
V 108	V 110	VN 54
V 109	V 687	VB 198
V 688	V 636	B 116
V 98 <sup>58</sup>	P 199	C 2889 (garšūnī)
V 99	P 4811	BM 98
V 122		L 2438
V 126		
V 190		
[P 191] <sup>59</sup>		
[P 192] <sup>59</sup>		
P 199 <sup>60</sup>		
L 4240		
C 3163 [=3293]		
D 135		
D 136		
«Ms at Mosul»		
Sbath Fihris 509		
Se°ert 133		

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58) This manuscript is lost.

59) Not mentioned in GCAL.

60) Attributed to both MĀRĪ and °AMR in GCAL !

TABLE N° 3:  
ATTRIBUTION ACCORDING TO THE MANUSCRIPTS

MĀRĪ	ʿAMR	ŞALĪBĀ	ANONYMOUS
<i>V 110</i>	V 190 <sup>61</sup>	<i>VN 54</i>	V 109
<i>V 687</i>	P 191	C 2889	L 4240
	P 192		V 126
	V 108		P 199
	V 688		<b><i>L 2438</i></b>
	V 99		V 122
			<i>P 4811</i>
			<b><i>B 116 (?)</i></b>
			C 3163 (?)

Manuscripts in **bold** and *italics* contain the **Five-Chapter Work**.  
Manuscripts in plain text contain the **Seven-Chapter Work**.

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61) Attribution is added by a second hand.

TABLE N° 4:  
CHRONOLOGY OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

	The Seven-Chapter Work	The Five-Chapter Work
13 <sup>th</sup> cent.	V 109 (1213 A.D.)	L 2438
	P 199 (1274 ? A.D.)	
	P 190	
14 <sup>th</sup> cent.	P 191	V 110
	P 192	
	C 3163 [= 3293]	
15 <sup>th</sup> cent.	V 108 (1401 A.D.)	
16 <sup>th</sup> cent.	V 122	
	V 99 (1591 A.D.)	
17 <sup>th</sup> cent.	V 126 (1687 A.D.)	
	V 636	
	L 4240	
18 <sup>th</sup> cent.	V 688	P 4811 (1724 A.D.)
		C 2889 (1730 A.D.)
		BS 12 (1767 A.D.)
		V 687
		VN 54
19 <sup>th</sup> cent.		VB 198
		BMg 98

TABLE N° 5:  
THE SEVEN-CHAPTER WORK

	P 190	P 191	P 192	P 199	V 99	V 108	V 109	V 122 <sup>62</sup>	V 126	V 688	L 4240	C 3293
I:1	x	x				x					(x)?	
II:1	x	x				x					x	
2	x	x			x	x					(x)	
3	x	x		(x)	x	x					(x)	
III:1	x	x				x		x			x	
2	x	x				x					x	
3	x	x				x		x			x	
4	x	x				x		x			x	
IV:1	x	x				x			(x)		x	
2	x	x				x					x	
3	x	x				x					x	
4	x	x				x					x	
5	x	x				x					x	
6	x	x				x					x	
7	x	x				x					(x)	
V:1	x	x	x			x						
2	x		x				(x)					
3	x		x				x					x
4	x		x				x					x
5	x		(x)				x			x		x
6	x		(x)				x					x
7	x		x				x					x
VI:1	x		x				x					x
2	x		x				x					x
3	x		x				x					x
4	x		x				x					x
VII:1	x		x				x					x
2	x		x				x					x
3	x		x				x					x
4	x		x				x					x

62) This manuscript is virtually illegible.